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**TOPIC-MEANING & NATURE OF CURRICULUM**  
**PART-I**



## **CURRICULUM**

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There is available a multiplicity of concepts of curriculum since educationists give their own different interpretations of the content and functions of curriculum. Let us discuss three such concepts by three different thinkers, which represent three major contributions to the body of knowledge on curriculum. The first concept, stated by Albert Oliver, refers to curriculum merely as the educational program consisting of three important elements, such as studies, activities and guidance. The second concept, described by Philip Phenix, is based on a carefully thought out scheme of values which constitute the aims and objectives, or purposes of education. The third concept, given by Hilda Taba, looks at curriculum as the function of the public school, she list the three functions as preserving and transmitting cultural heritage, serving as an instrument for transformation of culture, and working as a means for individual development.

## **Meaning of Curriculum**

Etymologically, the term curriculum is derived from the Latin word “currere” which means run or run-way or a running course. Thus curriculum means a course to be run for reaching a certain goal. Arthur J. Lewis and Mid Alice (1972) defined curriculum as “a set of intentions about opportunities for engagement of persons to be educated with other persons and with things (all bearers of information process, techniques and values) in certain arrangements of time and space.”

A curriculum means, the total situation (all situations) selected and organized by the institution and made available to the teacher to operate and to translate the ultimate aim of education into reality.

In the words of Cunningham, curriculum is a tool in the hands of the artist (the teacher) to mould his material (the pupil) according to his ideal (objective) in his studio (the school). The material is highly self active, self-determining human being who reacts and responds consciously.

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Curriculum may be defined as the “social environmental in motion”. It is the sum total of all the activities and experiences provided by the schools to the learners for achieving the desired objectives. The courses of studies are merely a suggestion for curriculum activities and procedures, a guide for teaching to follow.

Curriculum is one of the most important items in the educative process. The curriculum, in fact, is the fundamental problem which determines the ‘warp’ and ‘woof’ of the process of education. What to do and how to do is the very essence of curriculum.

# Nature of Curriculum

## i. Curriculum as a Plan

Oliva (1982) stated that “Curriculum is a plan or programme for all experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of the school.”

Carter V. Good (1959) defined curriculum as “a general overall plan of the content or specific materials of instruction that the school should offer the student by way of qualifying him for gradation on certification for entrance into a professional or a vocational field.”

Tyler and Hilda Taba (1962) defined curriculum “as a plan for action, or a written document, which includes strategies for achieving desired goals or ends.”

Galen Saylor defines curriculum “as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated”.

## **ii. Curriculum as an Experience**

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Tanner and Tanner (1980) stated that “Curriculum is that reconstruction of knowledge and experiences systematically developed under the auspices of the school (or university) to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge and experience.”

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-54) states that “curriculum includes totality of experiences pupil receives through the manifold activities that go on in the school, classroom, library, laboratory, workshop, play ground and in numerous informal contacts between teachers and pupils.” In other words the whole life of school is curriculum which can touch the life of students at all levels and helps in evolution of a balanced personality.

According to Crow and Crow, “curriculum includes all the learners experiences in and outside the school that are included in a programme which has been devised to help to develop mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and morally.”

Franklin Boobit (1918) defined that “Curriculum is that series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life; and to be in all respects of what adults should be”

Krug (1957) defined as “Curriculum consists of all the means of instruction used by the school to provide opportunities for student learning experiences leading to desired learning outcome”



### **iii. Curriculum as a Subject Matter**

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Doll (1978) defined that Curriculum is both a subject to be taught at colleges and universities and a field in which practitioners work. Curriculum is the formal and informal content and process by which learners gain knowledge and understanding, develop skills and alter attitudes, appreciations and values under the auspices of that school”.

Curriculum can be considered in terms of subject matter (Tamil, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science) or content (the way of organization and assimilation of information). Historically and currently the dominant concept of the curriculum is that of subjects and subject matter there in to be taught by teachers and learned by students. Curriculum refers to the set of subjects or course offered and also those required or recommended or grouped for other purposes; thus such terms as the college 'preparatory curriculum' 'science curriculum' and 'premedical curriculum' are commonly used.

#### **iv. Curriculum as an Objective**

B.F. Skinner views the curriculum as being formulated according to behaviouristic objectives. The curriculum is the series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of attaining activity-based objectives.

W. W. Chatters (1923) viewed curriculum as a series of objectives that students must attain by way of a series of learning experiences

Edgar Bruce stated that the curriculum is “an educational instrument, planned and, used by the school to effect the purposes” (Edgar Bruce).

According to Payne, “curriculum consists of all the situations that schools may select and consciously organise for the purpose of developing the personality of its pupils and for making behaviour changes in them.”

Bobbit (1918) has defined curriculum “that series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life: and to be in all respects of what adults should be”. Here Bobbit determined curriculum objectives based on skills and knowledge needed by adults.

Ralph Tyler (1949) has presented the same views about the curriculum but he combined curriculum and instruction in his approach. Probably he thought that curriculum and instruction cannot be separated otherwise the aims and objectives of curriculum planning will not be attained.

### **v. Curriculum as a system**

Curriculum can be considered as a system for dealing with people and the processes or organization of personnel and procedures for implementing the system (Babcock, McNeil, Untruth).

### **vi. Curriculum as a field of study**

Curriculum can also be viewed as a field of study, comprising its own foundations and domains of knowledge, as well as its own research, theory, and principles (Orlosky and Smith, Schubert and Tanners).